



Appropriations Committee
Re: Governor's Proposed Budget
Testimony by Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director
Connecticut Parent Power
Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity **to testify in concern regarding the consolidation of the Commission on Children and other Commissions into a single agency with reduction of staff.**

I am Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director of Connecticut Parent Power a statewide parent-led organization that engages, educates and mobilizes diverse parents from across the state to act on issues that matter most to them improving outcomes for all children in areas of early childhood, care, education, health care reform and K-12 school systems.

Connecticut Parent Power works hand in hand with collaborative statewide partners such as the Connecticut Association for Human Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance and All Our Kin whom all work collectively to ensure that systems are built to improve and enhance higher quality and access to children and their families more effectively.

For the past nine months, Connecticut Parent Power has worked with our State's Early Childhood planning director team and the Commission on Children to lift up the voices of parents throughout our state through regional parent forum meetings that have proven to be effective in identifying gaps that presently exist in our diverse communities. Through this collective effort we had many parent leaders who are PLTI graduates facilitate conversations in their communities.

The Commission on Children has created one of the most successful parent leadership curriculum and training models in the United States. Parent Leadership Training Institute is one of two research based models in the United States, which is used in 12 other states and cities such as: New Orleans, Miami, Denver and the entire state of Wyoming to name a few.

Since 2001, our Connecticut Parent Power base has benefited from ongoing PLTI training that has made our organization the largest in the state to reach optimal levels of success with over 3046 parent leaders in communities across Connecticut, while securing funding



through the establishment of the Parent Trust Fund. Parents have gained the necessary skills to become well informed in local/state voice, legislation, and civic engagement opportunities that have cultivated better end results with their children.

The Commission on Children is considered a state and national expert on family policy and community engagement, who has continued to work collectively with our organization to ensure that there is a continuum of leadership opportunities for parents after their completion of PLTI.

The Commission on Children has also provided expertise to our organization in family civics, an important and much needed support. Due to the years of commitment and expertise in growing parent civic engagement, the Commission on Children serves as consultant by the Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families, which consists of over 50 foundations in the nation and could help our state and of most importance, our parents to attain a true partnership in shaping future growth of parental civic engagement, nationwide.

The Commission on Children has also had the ability to link home visitation and parent engagement policy into the early childhood policy domain, which has consistently been inclusive of lifting parent voice in all aspects of shaping better policies for all children in diverse settings.

The Commission on Children presently serves as co-chair of the Governor's Cabinet on Early Care and Education in home visitation and parent engagement, which has been instrumental in ensuring that parent voices are reflected at all levels of shaping policy, locally and statewide.

Connecticut Parent Power has been a partner who has worked hand in hand with the Commission on Children to execute their designed whole strategy to teach parents in schools, how to work with the school and at home to teach their children how to read by third grade, which is afforded to parents in both English and Spanish by parent leaders across the state.

Other critical pieces that the Commission on Children has provided expertise in is fatherhood policy, which prompted the legislation that created the fatherhood initiative in our state, that many of our Connecticut Parent Power fathers lead in our communities.

The Commission on Children has been a champion in leading our national network that has been good for Connecticut. The Commission has worked with Connecticut Parent Power across race and diverse communities to create fast, nimble, trend-setters, best policies such



as creating an early childhood office, anti-bullying, child obesity reduction, reading, low birth-weight, youth employment, the plight of black male students and the achievement gap to mention a few.

Therefore, this consolidation of Commissions drastically reduces their effectiveness to address issues of race, gender, age, and well being of children. It will save NO money as the Commission brings in more than the alleged savings of \$700,000 in one year alone. The Commissions have already been cut over 50% but still passionately pursue their work. They already share equipment, rooms and utilities. Therefore, this proposal is not one that is in the best interest of children and parents, as it will have negative implications in watering down all that the Commission on Children and its parent leaders represent.

Connecticut Parent Power will continue to be available as a resource to the Legislature, the Planning Team, and the Administration to help in any way during this valuable process.

I know all of you on the Appropriations committee care about the wellness of our children and parents. This is why, Connecticut Parent Power, alongside its parents across the state are counting on you to ensure that the important work of the Commissions is not compromised in any way. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and we look forward to your continued support!

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